

**EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD  
MINUTES**

**Meeting of April 1, 2009**

Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center  
3300 Briggs Chaney Road  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

**Members Present:** Kim Bobola, Ph.D. (Chair); Colleen Ionata (Vice Chair), Bill Strassberger (Parliamentarian); Vanessa Ali; Thomas Aylward; Amjad Chaudhry; Marva R. Deskins, Esq.; G. Stanley Doore; John Fausti, Esq., Dwayne Parris; Alfreda H. Payne; Anthony Ramirez; Benoy Thomas and John P. Thomas.

**Members Absent:** Sheala Durant (Treasurer), David Kochanski, Esq.; Eric Luedtke; and Allan Mulligan.

**Staff:** Chuck Crisostomo (Assistant Director, Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center) and Anjoo Chohda (Senior Executive Administrative Aide, Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center)

**Guests:** Jeff Dunckel (Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, Department of Transportation); Kristin O'Connor (White Oak Master Plan, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission); Mara M. Parker (Staff, Councilmember Marc Elrich's office); Claire Iseli (Staff, Councilmember Don Praisner's office); Barbara Foresti (East Montgomery County, White Oak Master Plan Citizens Advisory Committee); Adrienne Lees (Greater Colesville Civic Association), and Robert Dongu (Gazette reporter).

**Citizen's Forum:** Chair Bobola welcomed everyone. The guests introduced themselves.

**Call to Order:** The chair called the meeting to order.

**Chair Bobola:** introduced the evening's speaker, Jeff Dunckel, who is the Pedestrian Safety Coordinator in the Department of Transportation. The purpose of the presentation was to update board members on the County Executive's Pedestrian Safety initiative.

**Pedestrian Safety Initiative**

**Jeff Dunckel** provided background information on Pedestrian Safety and the resources allocated since 2001. Community outreach materials, including a Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MC DOT) brochure, the 2009 Department of Transportation Annual Report, and the Pedestrian Safety Initiative, were distributed. Several key priorities that have been identified by County Executive Isiah Leggett were conveyed.

**Key Priorities**

1. Improve pedestrian safety and mobility by transforming the County into a truly walkable community;

2. Ensure that every Montgomery County resident has a safe and viable alternative to using cars for local trips; and ensure that children living within walking distance of their neighborhood school have a safe walking route to school;
3. Significantly increase the proportion of residents and visitors who are aware of the behaviors most often involved in pedestrian collisions, and take recommended actions to reduce these risks; and
4. Ensure that pedestrian safety and accessibility are integrated in all public projects implemented by County and State agencies and in all future growth and private development in Montgomery County.
5. Effective traffic safety programs involve a combination of approaches to change behavior, including the Three E's of traffic safety- *engineering, enforcement and education*.

## **Vision**

Mr. Leggett's overall vision is to increase the safety and security of pedestrians and reduce pedestrian fatalities and collisions. By making pedestrian travel safer, easier and more convenient, other important objectives may also be achieved, such as improved health and fitness, a reduction in local vehicular congestion and pollution, and improving the community's appeal to businesses, residents and tourists.

## **Strategies**

The Pedestrian Safety Initiative sets out goals, timeframes and budgets starting with fiscal year 2009 for new and enhanced efforts to achieve several strategies. The strategies are as follows:

- Strategy 1: Target pedestrian safety improvements in High Incidence Areas.
- Strategy 2: Assess and improve pedestrian network and connectivity needs.
- Strategy 3: Increase the emphasis put on pedestrians and bicyclists in the planning process.
- Strategy 4: Identify and implement corridor and intersection modifications and traffic calming treatments.
- Strategy 5: Upgrade pedestrian signals.
- Strategy 6: Assess and enhance street lighting.
- Strategy 7: Modify pedestrian and driver behavior through enhanced enforcement and educational efforts.

This initiative significantly enhances the County's investment in educating motorists and pedestrians; keeping enforcement efforts visible and intensive; and aggressively applying the most innovative and pedestrian-friendly road engineering design to prevent pedestrian injury so as to result in a safe, livable, and accessible community.

## County Executive's Recommended Budget

Montgomery County currently spends approximately \$30 million annually in programs related to pedestrians. The Pedestrian Safety Initiative proposes new spending at about \$4.8 million per year and \$32.4 million over six years on pedestrian safety activities.

Copies of the recommended budget for FY 10 Pedestrian Safety Initiative were distributed. Guest speaker Dunckel reported that the Department of Transportation is working hard to attain approval of the FY10 Pedestrian Safety Initiative County Executive Recommended Budget request of \$5,185,490.00. The council is debating whether \$2.4 million of that total should go to other areas.

**Q & A:** The floor was opened for questions.

**Bill Strassberger** expressed concern for high school students who are crossing Route 29 eastbound into Tanglewood from Fairland Road. He is particularly concerned for the safety of neighborhood students who cross Route 29 coming home from Paint Branch High School.

**John Thomas** pointed out that the MC DOT brochure has no reference to cross walks. Board member Thomas also asked what the procedure is when someone reports a problem. In response, Mr. Dunckel stated that the County is working on setting up a 311 system<sup>1</sup> which is taking time to be operationalized, but will be of great assistance to residents. In the meantime, county residents are asked to call 240-777-6000 in order to lodge a complaint. The complaint will be responded to via email within two to three days. In the event that a response is not received within four weeks, the complainant is asked to re-send the email.

**Stan Doore** recommends that cross walk vertical paddles be expanded. Mr. Doore indicated that they are very effective from the driver's standpoint. When installed at an intersection or crosswalk, traffic naturally slows down. Stan Doore also suggested the following:

1. Installation of flexible vertical spindles and panels is helpful in alerting drivers immediately that they are arriving at a crosswalk or a signal.
2. Street lighting should have LED lights. Recent articles suggest the LED lights are very cost effective, and are being used more in towns and cities. Additionally, the LED lights could be centrally controlled by radio – this cannot be done for fluorescent/sodium lights.
3. Slowing vehicular traffic down is excellent. The use of count down lights is most effective from the pedestrian's standpoint and is useful from a drivers point of view.
4. Bikeway routes and sidewalks could be straightened if modular elevated construction is utilized on highly variable terrain. It would be very environmentally friendly too. This suggestion should be passed on to Bob Simpson.

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<sup>1</sup> The 311 system will provide a convenient single point of contact for residents who have non-emergency requests for government services, are seeking information, or want to express concerns. The system is expected to improve the timeliness and accountability of the County's responses to residents and will simplify the process for callers who will have to remember only one number (311) when they need assistance.

Jeff Dunckel indicated that he would speak with Bob Simpson, per Stan Doore's suggestion.

**Amjad Chaudhry** pointed out that sections of Good Hope Road (that run from New Hampshire to Route 198) originally had no sidewalks; then two or three years ago some sidewalks were built on one side only. In response, Jeff Dunckel mentioned that lots of transit and passengers who use the road have requested these sidewalks. Some sidewalks installed were in a designated Special Protection Area. Therefore, a more creative, environmentally sensitive design was used. If the porous material proves durable and effective, it may be used in other parts of the county where better management of storm water runoff is needed.

**Alfreda H. Payne** thanked Jeff Dunckel for this report, and then asked: How much revenue is generated from speed cameras? Do the tools that display the speed limit of vehicles also record the speed? Dunckel responded that speed cameras generate an estimated \$10 million or more. Details can be viewed on Department of Police web site. The speed tools, which are called Smart Trailers, serve as a communication device to let drivers know their speed. This device tends to have a calming effect on drivers.

**Dwayne Parris** asked what was the FY 09 budget and status of FY 10's budget. Dunckel responded that the FY10 budget request for approximately \$5 million had been submitted to the County Council on March 16, and is currently going through an analytical process. A public hearing regarding Pedestrian Safety will take place on April 16, 2009.

Jeff Dunckel thanked the board members for their questions, and shared his email address ([jeff.dunckel@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:jeff.dunckel@montgomerycountymd.gov)) in the event of any further questions.

**Chair Bobola** thanked Jeff Dunckel for the presentation, and together, each one highlighted several areas for follow up.

**Chuck Crisostomo:** distributed a county survey to board members for completion. The survey evaluates the East County Regional Services Center's quality of service, level of effort, and success rate in terms of their work with the Citizens Advisory Boards. The surveys are administered to each of the county's Citizens Advisory Boards.

#### **Approval of Minutes:**

Chair Bobola asked for a review of the minutes of the ECCAB Meeting of March 4, 2009. Stan Doore requested minor edits to page two of the minutes.

**[April 1, 2009 - 1]** A motion to approve the minutes of March 4, with the addition of Stan Doore's announcements, was offered. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

**Director's Report:** **Chuck Crisostomo** announced that the:

- *East County Intercom* was available for April.
- Special Election for District 4 County Council seat will be held on April 21st.

- Data reported at a recent Foreclosure Workshop indicated that Spencerville is having sharpest decline (41% reduction) in average home value. Aspen Hill has seen 22 to 23% reduction in home value, while Potomac and Poolesville have a 7% drop in home value.
- A pro bono legal clinic will be offered at the EMRSC for housing specialists.
- County Executive Leggett will be the principal speaker on April 2 for Arab Heritage Month from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Executive Office Building Auditorium.
- EMRSC staff would like to attend civic association meetings to hear about issues of importance (e.g., police reports) to these associations. Chuck Crisostomo has visited John Fausti and residents of Tamarack at their annual Civic Association meeting. Board members are asked to share any upcoming meetings in their communities.

**John Fausti, Esq.,** asked: Since Montgomery County has one of the lowest employment rates in Washington area. How does that reflect a high foreclosure rate? Chuck Crisostomo responded that his comparison is only within Montgomery County and not compared with to the Metro Washington region.

#### **Chair's Report: Kim Bobola**

#### **Announcements**

- Colleen Ionata (Vice Chair) and Sheala Durant (Treasurer) will not be continuing as members of the board. This will result in two vacancies on the board. To fill the board vacancies, an interview committee had been established, and interviews were conducted. New board members will be in place for the upcoming year.
- Kim Bobola is ineligible to serve as the chair in the 2009-2010 year due to the term limits of the chair position. A nominating committee is needed to determine a slate of officers for the upcoming year. The nominating committee will contact board members and seek nominees or self-nominees. The slate of officers will be presented at the ECCAB Meeting in May, and voting on the new board officers will be conducted at the ECCAB meeting in June.
- The Services Committee has prepared a letter that requests additional trash receptacles in Columbia Park. Copies have been distributed to each ECCAB member.
- Youth Forum proposal for the May board meeting will be presented for review and comment.
- Bill Strassberger is asking for additional thoughts regarding the Hollywood Ballroom. ECCAB has heard from Bobby Fries and her supporters at the ECCAB Meeting in March. The Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee will be gathering additional ideas and thoughts.

- Colesville Strawberry Festival is back on again, and set for May 30<sup>th</sup>. Volunteers are needed to man the ECCAB booth. A sign-up sheet was circulated.
- We continue to monitor the status of Paint Branch High School Modernization, which was reported to be “on hold indefinitely” until the county hears how much money it will receive from the State this year.
- An Evening of Bullying, Awareness, Prevention and Intervention & Summer Resources Fair will be held on April 2 at Eastern Middle School.
- The Northeast Consortium Clusters meeting will be held on April 22 at 7:30 p.m. at Cloverly Elementary School.
- The County Executive has responded to ECCAB’s letter of March 6, 2009, regarding the revitalization of the Burtonsville Shopping Center and the associated construction of the Burtonsville access road.

The County Executive acknowledged ECCAB’s support for a traffic signal along MD 198 at the future Burtonsville access road. The letter has been forwarded to Mr. Neil Pedersen, Administrator of the Maryland State Highway Administration, to ensure that the community’s position on this matter will be considered.

**John Thomas** – mentioned that new trash cans have been installed at Columbia Park and commended the prompt service.

#### **Council’s Report: Claire Iseli**

- Announced there are proposed revisions to the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Council member Mike Knapp has identified changes to historic preservation criteria.
- Reported that the Council’s Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee is continuing to review the organization of recreation programs across the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission’s (M-NCPPC) Montgomery County Department of Parks and Montgomery County’s Department of Recreation. It is a slow process. A public hearing will be held at some point.
- Shared concerns regarding the Upper Paint Branch Special Protection plan. It is environmentally sensitive. The County Executive has sent a letter to County staff that identifies these concerns for consideration prior to permit application approvals.
- Announced that efforts to pursue the matter of the Maydale Environmental Education Center are continuing. Council members Valerie Ervin and Duchy Trachtenberg are sending a memo to Royce Hanson, Planning Board Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Jerry Weast, Superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools, and the Friends of Maydale organization, to encourage their collaboration so that the program can continue.

## **Mara Parker (for Councilmember Elrich)**

- **Paint Branch High School Modernization.** In response to concerns about possible further delays, none are expected. The modernization project will occur as planned with ground-breaking scheduled to take place this year.
- **Speed Camera and Pedestrian Safety.** On April 2, the Pedestrian Safety Committee will take a look at the first part of the Fire and Rescue budget. The county executive is giving assurances that the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Fee will generate \$14 million annually; however, the County Council has not taken action on this proposal. Speed camera funds are also being considered as a revenue source. This is in the decision process.
- **Ongoing Disability Retirement, pertaining to the Fraternal Order of Police.** There has been no progress on this issue.
- **Hollywood Ballroom.** At a meeting yesterday, county officials acknowledged that certain activities held at the Hollywood Ballroom represent a larger problem in the county. In preliminary discussions, county officials would like to ensure that promoters of go-go activities are bonded and that these events are properly supervised. Any regulations that are developed are not intended to eliminate programs for kids, nor to impede business and economic development.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Outreach Committee: Marva Deskins, Chair**

- **Marva Deskins** confirmed that the Youth Forum will be held on May 6<sup>th</sup> at the East County Citizens Advisory Board meeting from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The forum will focus on five main topics: *Out of School Activities, Quality of Education, Safety, Gangs, and Cultural Awareness.* The principals of Blake, Paint Branch, and Springbrook high schools have each been asked to identify two students to attend on behalf of the school. The school principal and/or their representatives are also invited to the youth forum. The draft agenda has been shared by Chair Bobola. There will be Q&A session for Youth. ECCAB members would like to hear suggestions and thoughts from youth regarding the Hollywood Ballroom.
- At the conclusion of the Youth Summit, the Outreach Committee will draft and present a report to the County Executive.
- **Fredda Payne** attended the Lab Quest meeting of March 23, which included a tour of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) facilities. FDA is in the process of developing 600 acres of land adjacent to the Federal Research Center, and has received \$163 million from President Obama's Stimulus package.

### **Services Committee: Anthony Ramirez, Chair**

- **Anthony Ramirez** reported that the Services Committee is following up with the State Highway Administration regarding the traffic study along Route 29, and the possibility of signage for the Post Office now located on Dino Drive in Burtonsville.
- The Services Committee continues to track the progress of Paint Branch High School's modernization, and is pleased that this continues to be a priority for ECCAB.
- The committee continues to seek any feedback regarding the status of the Northeast Consortium. The committee will continue to monitor program funding for it to continue.

### **Economic Development and Infrastructure (EDI) Committee: Tom Aylward, Chair**

- **Tom Aylward** reported extensively on the committee's research pertaining to the Hollywood Ballroom. Ms. Fries had attended the EDI Committee Meeting in March. As a business owner, she presented one side of the story. There are other businesses that could be affected by the go-go activities that had been held at the Hollywood Ballroom. ECCAB is open to hearing other sides of the story. EDI Committee continues to collect and review information about the Hollywood Ballroom, in general, and the go-go activities in particular.

**Old Business :** None

**New Business:**

**Chair Bobola –**

- Asked for volunteers to serve on a nominating committee to determine ECCAB's slate of officers for the upcoming year. Tom Aylward and Amjad Chaudhry volunteered to serve on the committee.
- County Council is holding a public hearing on the operating budget. Kim Bobola is scheduled to testify on behalf of ECCAB on April 14<sup>th</sup>. Proposed ECCAB priorities include the following:
  1. Paint Branch High School Modernization;
  2. Burtonsville Revitalization, based on community concerns and requests to encourage development;
  3. A new sector plan for the White Oak and FDA, along with a continued focus on development of the Percontee, Washington Adventist Hospital, and the WSSC; as well as the transportation projects identified by the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee.
  4. ECCAB's continued support for the County Executive's Proposed Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Transport Fee.



**Bill Strassberger:** asked that board members share their thoughts on the Hollywood Ballroom. There was additional discussion on this matter. Chuck Crisostomo suggested that a meeting could be arranged with the 3<sup>rd</sup> District Police station to provide Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee with another side of the story.

**Stan Doore:** made a motion that ECCAB recommend that County Government purchase a triangular area of property at/near the Federal Research Center for the purpose of recreation. This triangular area is located in close proximity to a densely populated area. In response, Chuck Crisostomo suggested that, since the exact location of the property was unclear, it would help to have a map and a clear description of the request that is being put forth.

**[April 1, 2009 - 2]** A motion was made that ECCAB recommend to county officials that property at/near the Federal Research Center identified on a map be purchased for recreation purposes.

**Chair Bobola** referred the matter to the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee.

**Stan Doore:**

- Announced that online learning could be examined as a budget savings tactic.
- Distributed copies of the *Calverton Current* newsletter (March and April 2009 editions)
- Addressed a flyer that he distributed to ECCAB members regarding the youth laptop program.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

*The next meeting of ECCAB is scheduled for May 6, 2009.*